

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-5566-2000

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <https://bd.usembassy.gov/>



**U.S. AMBASSADOR MARCIA BERNICAT'S
REMARKS AT LAUNCH OF THE ZERO TB CITIES
INITIATIVE IN BANGLADESH**

DHAKA, OCTOBER 28, 2017

Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Mohammed Nasim, MP;

State Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Zahid Maleque, MP;

Secretary, Health Services Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Md. Serajul Huq Khan;

Additional Secretary, Health Services Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Roxana Quader;

Mayor, Dhaka South City Corporation, Sayeed Khokon;

Distinguished officials from the Government of Bangladesh;

Distinguished colleagues, guests, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen:

Assalam-u-Alaikum, nomoshkar, and good morning!

I'm honored to be here today to help welcome Dhaka into the Zero TB Cities Initiative.

I congratulate the Government of Bangladesh for recognizing the importance of this initiative and for your commitment to improving the lives of Bangladeshis everywhere, including right here in Dhaka.

Today marks an important milestone in our collective effort to end tuberculosis, or TB, in Bangladesh. This is significant, because Bangladesh has the seventh highest prevalence rate of TB in the world, and with more than 18 million people, Dhaka is one of the world's most densely populated cities, making it especially vulnerable to an outbreak. By bringing Dhaka into this

initiative, we will be better able to prevent, identify, and treat tuberculosis and help save lives.

The United States Government is proud to support the Zero TB Cities Initiative through the United States Agency for International Development with contributions from the U.S. Department of State, Centers for Disease Control, and U.S. Department of Defense.

The Zero TB Cities Initiative also complements our government's support of the Bangladesh National TB Program. As you all know, the National TB Program has made tremendous progress in increasing the rates of TB detection and treatment success as well as lowering the TB mortality rate. But despite progress, the prevalence of TB is still too high, not only here in Bangladesh, but around the world.

TB affects people's lives in real ways and can reach anyone at any age, including children. During the video screening a bit later on, you'll meet Sabbir, a young boy from Dhaka. Sabbir loved to ride his bike, spend time with his friends, and study in school. After he was diagnosed with multi-drug resistant TB, his life took a dramatic turn for the worse. But thanks to months of care provided by the National TB Program with assistance from USAID, he fully recovered. The Zero TB Cities Initiative will bring this high level of service delivery throughout Dhaka and therefore better address the needs of people, like Sabbir, who suffer from TB.

The Zero TB Cities Initiative is also important in that it helps create a cohesive, strategic approach to fight TB. Findings from the 2015-2016 National TB Prevalence Survey show that TB prevalence rates vary by location and demographic groups. The survey showed very high rates in urban areas, and among men and the elderly. Based on this evidence, the 2018-2022 National Strategic Plan for TB calls for an approach that targets cities and at-risk populations.

We will use the latest scientific evidence and data to inform our efforts. By adopting this kind of approach, Bangladesh will be better able to achieve its ten- and twenty-year targets to end TB.

We can be successful only if we work together, particularly in high burden areas, such as cities, and populations who are most vulnerable.

We will work together to strengthen health services under the Government of Bangladesh's Universal Health Coverage principles of quality, efficiency, and equitability. And we will work together to regularly monitor the impact of interventions.

Joining the Zero TB Cities Initiative will allow the Government of Bangladesh and its partners to draw on experiences from around the world to combat this terrible disease. Dhaka will certainly learn from other sister cities. But, its own rich public health experience and its pool of highly qualified and creative professionals will ultimately determine the content and direction of the program, making Bangladesh's fight against TB both successful and sustainable.

Bangladesh's success in improving health outcomes over the last few decades is remarkable. We are happy to join all of you in supporting this initiative that will add urban TB control to Bangladesh's growing list of notable health achievements.

Thank you all, Onek dhonnobad!

=====

** As Prepared for delivery*